

Published in:

Report of the Committee Appointed by the General Assembly of South Carolina in 1740. On the St. Augustine Expedition under General Oglethorpe.

Published by the South Carolina Historical Society. (Charleston, S.C. : Walker, Evans & Cogswell Co., Printers, Nos. 3 and 5 Broad and 117 East Bay Streets, 1887.)

English Account of the Battle of Fort Mose, June 1740.

In these extracts from the records of Georgia and South Carolina, several men who survived the Battle of Fort Mose tell their version of what happened. What is the same about the accounts of Thomas Jones and William Palmer, and what is different? What do they say about conditions at Mose? Do you think William Palmer was influenced by the fact that his father was one of the commanders? How? Who gets the blame for the defeat at Fort Mose? How do these two men feel about Col. John Palmer and Gen. James Oglethorpe? What orders did Oglethorpe give about escaped slaves in Florida?

Compare these two accounts with the account given by Spanish governor Manuel de Montiano. Whose account do you trust? Which account is probably more accurate about life in the English camp? Which one is probably more accurate about the size of the Spanish attacking force? Which one do you think is more accurate about the numbers of people killed and taken prisoner? Why?

Notes

Although both the English and Spanish accounts talk about a battle that occurred on the same day, they give different dates for the battle. This is because England and Spain used different calendars in 1740.

Vocabulary

- Creeks and Yucees*..... Indian allies of the English from Carolina and Georgia.
- Flankers:* The corners or bastions of Fort Mose.
- Highlanders:* The Scottish Highlanders were a unit fighting with Oglethorpe.
- Royal Palmetto:* Probably what we know as “Spanish Bayonet”, a palm that can grow several feet in height, and that has sharp spiky fronds.
- Trench or Ditch:* The dry moat around Fort Mose.

Extract No. 29

One of General Oglethorpe's Stipulations about fighting in Florida

And I do further declare, that all Negroes which have Deserted from South Carolina, and which shall be taken in Florida during the said Expedition, shall be delivered up to their respective owners, on paying the Sum of five pounds Sterling per head to the Captors.

JAMES OGLETHORPE.

Extract No. 30

Extract from Lieutenant Colonel Lejeau's Journal

THE 30TH OF MAY, 1740.

In the night late, the General was returned much out of Order. He had been towards Augustine, to some out place, where he took two Negroes, who say they are in a Starving Condition at the Castle.

Extract No. 32

Deposition of Thomas Jones, survivor of the Battle of Fort Mose
SOUTH CAROLINA, COM. BERKS

Thomas Jones, being duly Sworn on the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, Deposeth and Saith: That he was hired by General Oglethorpe, to Serve in the late Expedition against St. Augustine, as Linguist to the Creeks and Yuchee Indians, who joined the Forces on that occasion, and also to head them in all actions they should be Employed in, he being himself of Indian Extract.

That he, with a Party of Creek Indians, joined the General at the St. Johns River. The General ordered him constantly to keep scouting round the Country, to watch the Enemy's Motions, and to Endeavour to take some Prisoners; but positively enjoined him not to permit the Indians to burn or destroy any Houses.

That he often told the General they would soon be tired with that way of Proceeding, for that they loved to go and do their Business at once, and return home again. To which the General replied, if they have a mind to go home, don't disturb them, let them go. That after about three weeks had been spent in ranging only forward and backward, many of the Creeks, being quite tired with constant fatigue day and night, and disheartened that there was not prospect of attacking Augustine, returned home.

That before and after the Army had marched within two miles of Augustine, Colonel John Palmer said, he knew how to do it, and offered to go in with a Party of Men and burn the Town; but that he heard the General say it was too hotheaded a thing; and this Deponent Saith, that he knows himself that it was very easy to have been done, for that afterwards ranging by night, he took particular Notice of that Part of the Town where the Colonel proposed to enter.

That he was present often when the General talked with the Spanish Prisoners and Deserters; and observed that he pursued wholly their opinion and advice, more particularly Don Diego Espinosa; and that he heard the General's Secretary say Several times, after the Army marched back to Fort Diego (at the Espinosa plantation on Diego Plains) that Don Diego persuaded the General, if he took possession of Anastasia Island with his Forces, the Castle would Surrender.

That the General, about the Eighth of June past, ordered him, this Deponent, with about thirty-five Indians, to join in the Highland Company, the Rangers, and a Sergeant, and twelve Soldiers, making all together about one hundred and thirty men; and to go with Colonel Palmer, to whom he said he had given the direction of the whole, to follow his Directions; and to be sure to keep the Indians always out Scouting. That the General added, he was going over with his men to Anastasia: That when he made a signal from thence, this party was to Fire upon the Town by Night. That he heard Colonel Palmer tell the General, the Party was not enough; that he had too few men, upon which the General assured him, that he would send him more. And the next morning, just before the said Party set off, he, this Deponent, heard Colonel Palmer again repeat the like to the General, adding these words: "Sir, you are going to sacrifice those men!" To which the General answered, that as soon as ever he had taken possession of the Island, he would send him more assistance.

That on the tenth day of June, the Party arrived at Fort Moosa, in Sight of Augustine Castle. That all except the Rangers went inside that Fort, which had been dismantled, and encamped there. That Colonel Palmer disapproved of it, but that notwithstanding they all went to making Palmetto Huts. That many words on this account passed between Colonel Palmer, Capt. McIntosh and Capt. McKay, day after day afterwards: the Colonel on one side telling them that the Enemy, from the Castle, could count their number almost to a man, and that they would have their Throats Cut, and they on the other side declaring, that as they had encamped there, they would not move; if the Enemy came they must Fight. And this Deponent Saith, that he never could perceive that Colonel Palmer had any Commission, or that he was obeyed as having the Chief Command. On the Contrary, that Capt. McIntosh and Capt. McKay seemed to carry equal Command, did not observe his directions; and that

he, this Deponent, often heard them all three differ and dispute about it. That Colonel Palmer, every morning before break of Day, used to go into the Fort, and endeavor to rouse the men up to stand to their Arms, but that they would still be Sleeping, Officers and all; which occasioned a great deal of Difference between Colonel Palmer and them. That in the mean time the Rangers and Indians every day Scouted round about and drove up a great many Horses. That after the General's Colors were Seen upon Anastasia, the twelfth, as this Deponent remembers; that night, according to the General's Directions, the Rangers, Indians, and a few of the Highlanders, with Capt. McKay, went out and fired into the Town. But that no men being sent over from Anastasia, Col. Palmer frequently complained, in this Deponent's hearing, That the General had left them for a Sacrifice.

That on the fifteenth, two hours before Day, Col. Palmer and almost all the Rangers got up as usual, and stood to their Arms. That the Colonel went into the Fort and roused the men there; but that most of them lied down again. That he, this Deponent, about an hour after, was talking with the Colonel in the Gateway, and hearing a Gun fired very near, betook themselves into the Fort, lest the Indians might leave the white men, and that Colonel Palmer betook himself to the Trenches, whom he never saw after. That he found the men in great hurry and Confusion, some dressed and some undressed. That he got all the Indians together in one Flanker, who fought till most of them were killed or taken. That he could not see one of the Soldiers. That, he could not find Captain McIntosh although he went into every one of the Flankers three times. That he found Capt. McKay in one of the Flankers, just got up in his Shirt, with a small sword and a musket, whom he advised to support the Gate with the Highlanders, but he did not do it. That the Enemy attacked in four Parties. That the Gate was defended a Quarter of an hour only by the two Flankers on either side, after which the Enemy Entered, sword in Hand, headed by an Officer, whom he, this Deponent, shot. That the Fort being soon full of men, about an hour before day, all that could jumped over into the Ditch, and escaped by forcing their way through the Enemy that Surrounded the Fort. That he, this Deponent, having at last also jumped over, met with Colonel Palmer's two sons near the Ditch, with whom and Six Indians he cleared a way through the Enemy; opening a passage as they fired, and that Captain William Palmer, in particular, killed a Spanish Indian that was then going to knock down him, this Deponent. That they waded down the Creek which runs by Moosa, about a mile and a half where they met with many others that escaped, amongst which was Captain McKay, and one Mr. Scroggs, another officer of the General's, both without Clothes, the former having a small Sword in his hand, and two or three scars in his body, which resembled the pricks of Palmetto Royal, and the latter having, as he thinks, a Gun and Pistol, said that he had thrown away his Clothes the better to Swim. That about an hour after

day break, Lieutenant Cadogan, who by chance came down the River, took them all in, and landed them where the Carolina Regiment was.

And this Deponent further Saith, That to the best of his belief and knowledge, about fifty whites and Indians of our party were killed, and upwards of twenty taken; and that he heard the General afterwards read a Packet from the Governor of Augustine to that of St. Mark's, which had been delivered to him by four of the Creek Indians, taken at Moosa and Set at Liberty again by the Governor of Augustine to Carry the Said Packet, which said: "That the number of men which attacked the party at Moosa was five hundred and fifty chosen men, of which one hundred and thirty-two (as this Deponent remembers) were killed on the Spot, with the two Principal officers, besides what came back into the Castle wounded." And this Deponent also Saith, that those Creeks told him, the Spaniards, after their victory at Moosa, cut off the heads and private parts of the Slain and carried them into Augustine in Triumph, and that they were most of then overheated with Liquor, which had been given them before, to animate them to the attack, which this Deponent believes to be true, for that when he went over from Anastasia with the General to bury the Dead, he found just by the Fort a Rum Keg, with Gun Powder in the bottom.

THOMAS JONES.

Sworn before me this 9th of April,
1741.

HENRY GIBBES, J. P.

Extract No. 36

Deposition of Captain William Palmer, son of Col. John Palmer, and survivor:

SOUTH CAROLINA, COM. BERKS

William Palmer being duly sworn on the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God, declared: That he was Employed in the late Expedition against St. Augustine, by General Oglethorpe, as Captain of a Small Troop of Rangers (Consisting of Ten Carolinians) to make Excursions with his Rangers wherever he thought proper, in order to search for cow pens and drive up Cattle and Horses for his use. But not to destroy any Houses, if the People had quitted them, and that the General promised to allow him besides his Pay, forty pounds for every Horse, and Thirty pounds for every Mare, he should catch.

That Colonel Palmer, his Father, attended the General in the Said Expedition as a Volunteer, which the General expressed a great desire of, as the Colonel had been at the head of an Expedition from Carolina, in

the year 1727, against the Spanish Indians, and was well acquainted with the parts adjacent to St. Augustine, the ways of the Indians, and Ranging in the Woods. But that he bore no Commission at all under the General.

That he, this Deponent, was ordered by the General, at Diego Plains, to join with his Rangers Captain McIntosh's independent Company, consisting of about Sixty Highlanders, in the General's Pay, a Corporal or Sergeant and twelve men of the General's Regiment, and about thirty Indians, Creeks and Yucees, making in all, when Numbered, One hundred and thirty men, and to march from thence to the Negro Fort, called Moosa, within two Miles from St. Augustine, from whence he was to make excursions.

That he happened to be by when the General told Colonel Palmer (who went with those Forces, and afterwards told this Deponent that they were by a Verbal order of the General, to be advised and directed by him) to alarm the Spaniards in Augustine as often as he could: And that he also afterwards heard Captain McKay and Captain McIntosh say they had the same orders in writing.

That the neck of Land heading to St. Augustine was so narrow that the Enemy's Motions could not be observed so well anywhere as at or in Sight of Moosa.

That when they arrived at Moosa, The Foot began to Camp within the fort, the Gate of which having been before taken down, and Several Breaches made in the Wall by the General, Colonel Palmer disapproved very much thereof, saying that he had much rather pitch anywhere without in open ground, where he could fight his Enemy all round about, wherever he could find an advantage, which Captain McKay and Captain McIntosh not regarding, but building a Palmetto House for themselves, as most of the Men did within the Fort, he himself pitched with the Rangers without. That he never heard either of them expressing any Uneasiness at being there, only that more Provisions were not sent to them. That he doth not know, nor believe, that the Colonel ever stayed one hour at a time in the Fort ever after, whilst this Deponent was present. That the Colonel frequently gave Captains McKay and McIntosh advice, which they never took. Particularly, that they should all rise at four every morning, and Stand to their Arms, because the Indians are constantly used to make an Attack, just before Break of day. That he often went twice in a morning into the Fort, to rouse them up; but that it did not seem to be regarded by them. That he often fell into a passion with them on that account; telling them that he valued his life no more than they did, but that they lay like dogs to have their Throats cut; that this Deponent often heard him wish himself away, for that he never saw such Men in his Life; that they did not regard his advice, and he had no Commission from the General to show.

That this Deponent never knew who had the Chief Command. That McKay and McIntosh seemed to act alike in everything. But that one day a Letter coming from Colonel Vanderdussen, directed to the Commanding officer at Moosa, he saw Captain McKay break open the same.

That, pursuant to the General's Orders, with his own and the Georgia Rangers commanded by Captain McKay, he made Excursions every day, sometimes for fifteen Miles round, returning every night, but one, to Moosa, and drove up about thirty Horses. But that McKay himself never rode with him, but one day. That he also went out at Nights and alarmed the Spaniards in St. Augustine; the Colonel going himself One Night with him. But that the Highland Company never moved out all the time. That the Indians every day ranged for Horses for themselves, and drove up about Seventy Horses.

That on the fifteenth of June past, about four in the Morning, he, this Deponent, got up from the Spot, where himself, the Colonel, and the Rangers Slept, about twelve yards without the Ditch, being roused by the Colonel who went immediately into the Fort to rouse the men there, as usual. That he imagines by the Noise he heard the Colonel make, that they were most asleep. That a little after he had put on his Boots and Spurs, most of his own men being awake, he heard the Words, stand to your arms, within the Fort, for there is a Body of men coning; without hearing any more from either of the two advanced Sentinels, which were followed immediately by a Volley from both Parties. Upon which, as the Colonel had before directed to be done on Such an Occasion, he, with his Brother and one Charles Graves, betook themselves to the Ditch, because the Highlanders's fire might Else endanger them as much as that of the Enemy. That a constant brisk Fire was preserved on both sides for some time; That in a very little time after he perceived the Enemy was within the Fort at Club work, hacking and Slashing in a terrible manner, till one Thomas Jones jumped over the Wall into the Ditch, where this Deponent was, and said the Fort was taken, it was all over, all our people were killed, and above two hundred Spaniards within, and advised to make their escape immediately. Upon which he, with his Brother, and said Graves and Jones, made his way through the Enemy's Smoke (by the way Shooting an Indian that was going to knock down Jones) to a Creek, through which he waded down (with some others that he found there, Escaped before him) to the River opposite to the Carolina Regiment's Camp. That he there found also Captain Hugh McKay and Scroggs, at the River's Side; the former with a small Sword in his hand and the Latter, a Pistol; having nothing of any kind on, but his Shirt. That Captain McKay had on only his Shirt, a pair of Linen Drawers, and a pair of Stockings; That he had a small Sear across two fingers, a small prick in his Breech, and the Top of his yard, which he showed, upon this deponent's perceiving a little blood through his Drawers, and that he supposes the same was occasioned by the prickly Palmetto Royal, which lined the

outside of the Ditch round the Fort, because the said McKay told him that he jumped over the wall. That whilst they waited by the River's side, having caused one to Swim over to Colonel Vanderdussen for a Craft to carry them over, Lieutenant Cadogan chanced to come down the River, who, upon their waving to him, came and took them all into his Boat, being 25 men, Whites and Indians.

And this Deponent further sayeth, that when the General first marched towards Augustine, being within one mile and a half of it, he halted with the army at a dividing path. That thereupon Col. Palmer told the General, he knew the way to enter the Town, and offered, at the head of two hundred Carolina Men, to go in and burn the Town, but that the General said it was too hazardous and that it was so long since he was there he had forgot the Situation of the Town. That a Negro then present (who had deserted to him from Augustine to Diego) gave another account which must be right, (which Negro was at large, and styled a Captain by him). That he knew what he had to do! That it was the Custom of Armies, always to show themselves to the Enemy first, and to make a feint. Accordingly, that the Army marched away to Moosa, a little behind them on one side, that the Indians who assisted in the Expedition told him, the said Deponent, that afterwards, when the General was upon the Island of Anastasia, they offered him to go over the River, and burn the Town; but that the General refused leave, saying, that the Houses would be useful to us.

WILLIAM PALMER.

Sworn before me this 19th of
February, 1741.

HENRY GIBBES, J. P.